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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. Embassy to Italy
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Funding Opportunity Title: Annual Engagement Innovation Fund

Funding Opportunity Number: XXXX

Deadline for Applications: February 15, 2024

Assistance Listing Number: *19.XXX*

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Embassy of the United States in Italy announces an open competition for past participants (“alumni”) of U.S. government-funded and U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs to submit applications to the 2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF 2024). We seek proposals from teams of at least two alumni that meet all program eligibility requirements below. Exchange alumni interested in participating in AEIF 2024 should submit proposals using the form at this link <https://form.jotform.com/233523822076151> by February 15, 2024.

Program Objectives:

AEIF provides alumni of U.S. government-sponsored and facilitated exchange programs with funding to expand on skills gained during their exchange experience to design and implement innovative solutions to global challenges facing their community. Since its inception in 2011, AEIF has funded nearly 500 alumni-led projects around the world through a competitive global competition.

U.S. Embassy to Italy will accept public service projects proposed and managed by teams of at least two (2) alumni that support themes such as:

- Countering Disinformation
- Transatlantic Security
- Economic Prosperity

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- Democracy and Democratic Values
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
- American Studies

Proposals that do not address the theme as outlined in the program objectives will be deemed ineligible. All project activities must take place outside of the United States and its territories.

Participants and Audiences:

Describe who the intended target audiences should be for the various activity categories

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: 12 months

Number of awards anticipated: 3 awards (dependent on amounts)

Award amounts: awards may range from a minimum *of \$5000 to a maximum of \$35,000*

Type of Funding: Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act

Anticipated programs start date: September 2024

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant, fixed amount award (FAA), or cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements and some FAAs are different from grants in that bureau/embassy staff are more actively involved in the grant implementation (“Substantial Involvement”).

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed in 12 months or less.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants:

The following individuals are eligible to apply:

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- Applicants must be alumni of a [U.S. government-funded or sponsored exchange program](#) or a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program (<https://j1visa.state.gov/>).
- Projects teams must include teams of at least two (2) alumni.
- Alumni who are U.S. citizens may not submit proposals, but U.S. citizen alumni may participate as team members in a project.
- Alumni teams may be comprised of alumni from different exchange programs and different countries.
- Applications must be submitted by exchange alumni or alumni associations of USG exchange alumni. No other organizations are eligible to apply. Exchange alumni can partner with not-for-profit or non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions to implement project activities. The grant can be issued to the individual alumni or the partner organization.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Inclusion of cost share is not a requirement of this opportunity.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Application Package

Application forms required below are available at <https://it.usembassy.gov/>

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

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Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Content of Application

We encourage applicants to apply using the following form XXXX which includes the items listed below:

- **Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact;
- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed;
- **Program Goals and Objectives:** The “goals” describe what the program is intended to achieve. What aspect of the relationship between the U.S. and Italy will be improved? The “objectives” refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable;
- **Program Activities:** Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.

Please ensure:

- The concept note clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity;
- The concept note is in English;
- The budget is in U.S. Dollars.

A Grants Review Committee will evaluate all eligible applications.

Required Registrations:

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration with the SAM.gov. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282,

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the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards.

Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required for federal assistance applications.

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.

- Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- **Please note that as of November 2022 and February 2022 respectively, organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code or CAGE code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.** If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove a CAGE or NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket (“incident”) with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at www.fsd.gov using the following language: “I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain a CAGE or NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated.”

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Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoD in addition to Department of State should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:

NCAGE Homepage:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx>

NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):

Exemptions

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if:

- An applicant's identity must be protected due to potential endangerment of their mission, their organization's status, their employees, or individuals being served by the applicant.
- For an applicant, if the Federal awarding agency makes a determination that there are exigent circumstances that prohibit the applicant from receiving a unique entity identifier and completing SAM registration prior to receiving a Federal award. In these instances, Federal awarding agencies must require the recipient to obtain a unique entity identifier and complete SAM registration within 30 days of the Federal award date.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

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3. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than February 15, 2024

4. Funding Restrictions

AEIF 2024 does not support the following activities or costs, and the selection committee will deem applications involving any of these activities or costs ineligible:

- Any airfare to/from the United States and its territories
- Activities that take place in the United States and its territories
- Staff salaries, office space, and overhead/operational expenses
- Large items of durable equipment or construction programs
- Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments, or entertainment
- Academic or scientific research
- Charitable or development activities
- Provision of direct social services to a population
- Individual scholarships
- Social travel/visits
- Gifts or prizes
- Duplication of existing programs
- Institutional development of an organization
- Venture capital, for-profit endeavors, or charging a fee for participation in project
- Support for specific religious activities
- Fund-raising campaigns
- Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

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Full proposals will be evaluated and rated based on the criteria outlined below. The criteria listed are closely related and will be considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of a proposal.

Note: Though not required, proposals that clearly and significantly utilize principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility will receive favorable consideration.

- **Mission priorities:** The applicant has clearly described how stated goals are related to and support U.S. Mission Italy's priority areas or target audiences. Goals and objectives are clearly stated, and the program approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results.
- **Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea:** The program idea is well developed, with detail about how program activities will be carried out. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline and will continue to have positive impact after the end of the program.
 - **Monitoring and evaluation plan:** The applicant demonstrates it can measure program success against key indicators and provide milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes outputs, outcomes, and indicators and shows how and when those will be measured.
- **Budget:** The budget justification is reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities.
- **Organizational capacity and record on previous grants:** The organization has expertise in its stated field and PDS is confident of its ability to undertake the program. This includes past performance with U.S. government funds.
- **Media plan:** The applicant demonstrates how they will disseminate information about their project to the public, including using press releases, interviews, podcasts, etc. in conjunction with social and traditional media platforms. Media plans should account for the inclusion of U.S. Mission to Italy branding on all products.

2. Review and Selection Process

A Grants Review Committee will evaluate all eligible applications.

3. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov (formerly, FAPIIS)

- i. The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is

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required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

ii. An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. Currently, federal agencies create integrity records in the integrity module of the Contractor Performance Assessment and Reporting System (CPARS) and these records are visible as responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov;

iii. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

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Payment Method Payments will be made in at least two installments, as needed to carry out the program activities

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply.

These include:

- [2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT](#)
- [2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION](#)
- [2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS](#)
- [2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE \(FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE\)](#)
- [2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY](#)
- [2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS](#)
- [U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#)

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following: NOTE:

- [Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#) (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 85 FR 49506 on August 13, 2020, particularly on:

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- Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
- Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. No. 115—232) (2 CFR part 200.216),
- Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
- Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
- Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

3. Reporting

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted.

Foreign Assistance Data Review: As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or regions or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

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Applicants should be aware of the post award reporting requirements reflected in [2 CFR 200 Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters](#).

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact italyalumni@state.gov.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Please refer back to Funding Restrictions in section D for costs not supported through the 2024 AEIF.

Venue Costs: Calculate costs for renting space for project-related activities such as workshops or other training activities. Consider looking for donated space first. If donated space is not possible, costs should be reasonable based on the local environment. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Promotional Items and Advertising: These items aim to amplify your project. All requests should be reasonable and relevant to the project. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Meals and Beverage: Include reasonable costs for snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and meals if essential to the project. Break down meals by the cost per person per meal.

All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Speaker/Consultant/Training Fees: Speaker: Maximum of \$250 per day for full programming. Trainer: Maximum of \$250 per day or \$25 per hour. Consider asking fellow Alumni with expertise to cost-share speaker/training fees.

Consultant: A reasonable consultant fee may be included by Alumni for project management and oversight. However, consider cost-sharing as the AEIF cannot provide salary type expenses. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Lodging and Per Diem: List per diem rates and hotel costs which directly support the implementation of the project and indicate single or double occupancy. Per diem rates should be calculated according to the U.S. government allowable rates

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or be adjusted to local prices if appropriate. Please consult with your U.S. Embassy/Consulate. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Travel: If the program involves travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel. Estimate the costs of travel for this project, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. Costs can include in-country and intraregional air fare or local travel costs required for the actual implementation of the project. Travel between the U.S. and project country is not supported. The AEIF does not support travel in business class or higher. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Supplies, Materials, Equipment: Include general office supplies, computer software, consumable automotive supplies (i.e. fuel), small equipment such as laptops, projector, etc., and expendable materials (i.e. paper, paint). Rent equipment rather than purchase if it is more cost-efficient. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Other: Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. Commonly cited items are administrative and accounting costs, shipping costs for materials and equipment, and monitoring and evaluation. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

“Cost Sharing” refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers’ time and donated venues.

Alcoholic Beverages: Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.